

for us to be able to discuss. If we cannot talk about life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness in this place, where can we talk about it?

Again, I thank my colleagues for participating and for their tenacity and their compassion and their affection for all Americans whether they agree or disagree on this issue. I appreciate very much their engagement.

I appreciate very much the volunteers who are scattered around the country right now who are serving women in some of the most difficult moments of their lives at crisis pregnancy centers, at women's resource centers, and other locations. They are volunteering; they are providing clothes; they are providing help; they are providing sonograms and pregnancy tests; and they are walking those families through those tough days. Thanks to those volunteers as well today, wherever they may be, and bless them for the ongoing work that they do.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, access to healthcare is on the line today for 24,000 Montana children. The House of Representatives is working to pass legislation that will reauthorize a program called the Children's Health Insurance Program, better known as CHIP, for 6 years and will keep the government open. If passed, it will then come to us for a vote.

Why don't we take the opportunity before us to come together on issues we agree on instead of always fighting on what divides us? I think we can all agree on keeping Montana kids healthy.

Let me tell you a story about a family from Helena, MT, the A-Gee family.

Jaxon was a normal baby—a happy, healthy baby—until October of 2016, when he was just 8 months old. That is when he was first flown from Helena to Missoula's Community Medical Center's Pediatric Intensive Care Unit. He was deathly ill with a respiratory infection.

At that time, it was not clear why Jaxon had gotten so sick, but his parents soon learned that he had Leigh syndrome, a disease in which the body is not able to process energy properly, which leads to muscle weakness, swallowing problems, and severe illnesses with just a simple or a common cold. His parents quickly learned to manage his new feeding tube, to suction his mouth and his throat, and to put him on oxygen monitors at night.

Unfortunately, Jaxon has had five more serious infections. Each time, he has become ill. It has happened so quickly that he has had to be flown to Missoula even though he has a team of pediatricians, nurses, dietitians, speech therapists, and physical therapists who

are trying to help keep him from getting ill.

As Jaxon's mom would say, when Jaxon gets ill, the only way to keep him from having to be flown to Missoula is to get him seen by his pediatrician as soon as possible so that if he does get sick, it is relatively minor.

I can tell you that this family in Montana is grateful for Healthy Montana Kids, which is Montana's CHIP program. They are thankful for its providing Jaxon's insurance and the copay for his care and his medical supplies. His mom says that the insurance is what makes it possible to manage Jaxon's condition and possible to afford well-baby checks instead of their just going to the doctor's on an emergency basis.

To add more background to the story, Jaxon's dad was disabled in a workplace accident, so he is home, caring for Jaxon and the family's other two children. Jaxon's mom works, and her employer has been phenomenal to her—those are her words—as they have faced Jaxon's hospitalizations, but the family of five couldn't afford Jaxon's care without Healthy Montana Kids. A helicopter bill for the ride from Helena to Missoula alone can be as much as \$34,000, and Jaxon has taken that flight six times.

This family doesn't know what it will do if the funding for CHIP runs out, but the family is committed to caring for its son no matter what. That is why I support a 6-year reauthorization of CHIP.

Let me provide another reason.

This is Danielle. She is 9 years old, and she lives in Deer Lodge, MT. When she was just 18 months old, she suddenly lost the ability to walk.

Cindy and I are the parents of four children. I cannot imagine a more frightening moment as a parent if one has an 18-month-old child, and he suddenly loses his ability to walk.

Danielle was diagnosed with a form of juvenile arthritis. You don't think about arthritis affecting an 18-month-old child. This is a disease that causes pain, swelling, a stiffness of joints, as well as vision problems.

Thankfully, Danielle was started on a medication—a twice-a-month injection that controls the swelling and inflammation. Because of that, she can walk and even run again. Yet these injections are expensive. To pay outright for just 1 month, it costs over \$6,000. Last summer, for 3 months, Danielle was unable to get the injections. She stopped walking, and she no longer could go to school. Her mom had to carry her through the house.

When Danielle was approved for Montana's CHIP program, she was able to go to the doctor's and get on another medication—an infusion this time. She is now back at school and running around—to quote Mom—“like a kid who doesn't have any problems.” Danielle loves to study math and science, and when she grows up, of all things, her dream is to be a doctor for

kids. Without CHIP, Danielle's family would be unable to afford the medication she needs. Without CHIP, Danielle wouldn't be walking.

Danielle and Jaxon and the thousands of other Montana kids and their families need us to work for them. So I am saddened that partisan politics would get in the way of access to healthcare for these children. We have the opportunity today to reauthorize CHIP for 6 years and avert a government shutdown at the same time.

I urge my colleagues to do the right thing here, to do the right thing for the 24,000 Montana kids who use this important program. I urge them to support a 6-year reauthorization of CHIP and to keep the government open.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who yields time?

If no one yields time, time will be charged equally to both sides.

The Senator from Vermont.

FUNDING THE GOVERNMENT

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, we are at a pivotal moment. If the Congress does not get its act together by tomorrow, there will be a government shutdown. A government shutdown will be extraordinarily destructive to the people of our country, millions of whom depend upon government services. It will be destructive to millions of Federal employees who keep their families going with a paycheck from the government. It will be destructive to the U.S. Armed Forces, men and women who put their lives on the line to defend us. So it seems to me that we have to do everything we can to prevent a government shutdown.

As everyone knows, we have a Republican Party that controls the U.S. Senate, a Republican Party that controls the U.S. House of Representatives, and a Republican who is in the White House, President Trump. We are now 3½ months into the fiscal year, and the Republican Party has yet to give us an annual budget.

The U.S. Government is a \$3 trillion operation. There is no business in this country of any size that can run week to week, month to month. We need an annual budget, and now the Republicans are coming back, asking for a fourth continuing resolution. You cannot run a government like that. It is unfair to the American people, unfair to the Armed Forces, unfair to all of us.

Three and a half months have gone in the fiscal year; yet the Children's Health Insurance Program has not been reauthorized. This is a program that has existed for decades with bipartisan support. How can we not reauthorize the CHIP Program?

Three and a half months of the fiscal year have come and gone, and we have not reauthorized the Community Health Center Program, which provides primary healthcare, dental care, mental health counseling, low-cost prescription drugs to 27 million Americans

in every State in this country. If legislation were brought to the floor of the Senate today, the Blunt-Stabenow bill reauthorizing the community health centers, I suspect, would get 70, 75 votes; yet Republicans, after 3½ months, have not been able to reauthorize the CHIP Program or the Community Health Center Program.

When we talk about the budget process, we are talking about three major issues; there are more, but there are three major issues. No. 1, will we continue to have parity in spending between defense spending and nondefense spending? Since 2011, in four different budgets, there has been a bipartisan agreement that for every dollar spent on defense is a dollar you will spend on the needs of a struggling middle class, millions of people who are struggling every day to keep their heads above water economically—a dollar here, a dollar there. That has been agreed upon on four separate occasions, but several weeks ago, the Republican leader, Senator MCCONNELL, came to the floor and said: We want to do away with that parity. We want to be able to spend more on the military and less on the needs of working families.

We have a middle class that is shrinking. We have people all over this country working two or three jobs. We have the highest rate of childhood poverty of almost any other major country on Earth. We have millions of elderly people who can't make it on \$12,000 or \$13,000 a year. We have a crisis sweeping the Nation, hitting my State of Vermont very hard. We have infrastructure that is crumbling. We cannot ignore the needs of the working families of this country and spend huge amounts of money only on the military.

Some of the things we have to do as we come together, as we must, for a bipartisan agreement is, of course, reauthorize CHIP and, of course, reauthorize the Community Health Center Program. The Stabenow-Blunt bill has nine Republican cosponsors. Every Democrat will support it. We have the votes. Let's do it.

We have to deal with the pension issue. One and a half million American workers are about to lose 50 to 60 percent of the pensions they were promised by the U.S. Government. That cannot be allowed to happen. We have to stand with those workers.

I went to a meeting earlier today dealing with the Social Security Administration. The Social Security Administration provides a process—the administrative arm makes sure that the elderly, disabled, and people who get Social Security benefits get those benefits in a timely manner. For years now, Republicans have underfunded that administration, and today there are simply not enough employees to do the work that has to be done. Amazingly enough, over at the House they are talking about massive cuts to the Social Security Administration on top of all the cuts they have already received.

The Washington Post wrote an article a few weeks ago—unbelievable—and what they said is that over the last year, if you can believe it, 10,000 people with disabilities who had applied for Social Security benefits died while waiting for those claims to be processed. They were not processed in a timely manner because the Social Security Administration does not have the workers it needs and has been significantly underfunded. For the sake of the senior citizens of our country, for the sake of the disabled, any budget agreement when we have parity must supply sufficient amounts of money for the Social Security Administration so that they can do their work.

Every Veterans Day, every Member of this body talks about how much they love veterans. The Veterans' Administration today has 30,000 vacancies, which means that our veterans are not getting the quality and timely care that they must be able to receive. We have to start filling those vacancies. Any budget agreement must include increased funding for the VA.

In my State of Vermont and all over this country, there are millions of young people who went to college, went to graduate school, and have left school deeply in debt. Because of high interest rates, some of those people now owe more money today after paying off, year after year, their debts than they did when they took out the debt. We have to address the debt crisis facing some 40 million Americans.

In Vermont and all over this country, if you are a working person, what do you do if you have a 3-year-old or a 2-year-old? Well, you look for decent, quality childcare. But all over this country it is extremely difficult to find that quality childcare. Any serious budget agreement we reach must include increased funding for childcare so that working people in this country know, when they leave their kid at a center, that child will receive quality care at a cost that is affordable. Every dollar we invest in early childhood education is a dollar very, very well spent.

All over this country, in this, the wealthiest Nation in the history of the world, we have infrastructure—roads, bridges, water systems, waste water plants—which is crumbling. In many parts of rural America, including the State of Vermont, we do not have high-quality, affordable broadband or cell phone service. How do you maintain a community, how do you bring business into a community, how do kids do their homework if you don't have decent broadband or cell phone service? We have to invest in rural America and make certain that every community in this country has broadband and the kind of infrastructure that it needs in order to prosper.

One of the tragedies taking place in this country today is resulting, unbelievably, in a lowered life expectancy rate here in the United States of America. Our life expectancy rate is actually in decline, and one of the reasons

for that is the tragic opioid and heroin epidemic, which claimed some 60,000 lives last year. We cannot ignore that problem. We have to invest in prevention. We have to invest in treatment. We have to help States all over this country and the families who are struggling with this issue.

My point is, we need parity, not for some abstract, inside-the-beltway reason; we need parity in spending because we need more in this country than just a strong military. We need a strong middle class. We need a strong working class. We cannot turn our backs on tens of millions of people who are struggling.

The second issue that we have to deal with here in the Congress is the issue of DACA and the need for clean Dreamers legislation. In September, President Trump initiated a very serious crisis. What he did is rescind President Obama's Executive order providing legal status through DACA to 800,000 young people. These are young people who were raised in the United States of America. These are young people who today are working. They are in school; they are in the military. This is the only home they have ever known. This is the only country that any of them or many of them can even remember. The idea of simply doing away with the legal status that they have, subjecting them to deportation, subjecting them to being taken away from the only country they have ever known and loved is literally beyond comprehension and unspeakable.

In September, when Trump initiated this process by rescinding Obama's Executive order on DACA, he said to the Congress, the Republican leadership in the House and Senate: You fix it. Get legislation.

Well, there are people right now—Senator DURBIN, Senator GRAHAM, and others—who are working on legislation, which doesn't go as far as I would like it to go, but they are working on serious legislation in the House. The vast majority of Democrats and many Republicans understand that we cannot turn our backs on these young people. That is not just what we feel here in the House and in the Senate; it is what the American people want. Poll after poll shows that 70, 75, 80 percent of the American people say: Provide these 800,000 young people with legal status. Provide them with a path toward citizenship. Very few people think that we should turn our backs on these young people, let DACA expire, and subject them to deportation. Let us do what the American people want us to do, and let us pass a strong Dreamers Act.

Last but not least, we had some terrible hurricanes some months ago. They brought a lot of disaster to Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Months have gone by, and we have yet to pass the kind of disaster relief that communities in those States and territories desperately need.

We cannot continue to kick the can down the road. We cannot continue to

run a \$3 trillion government on a month-by-month basis. It is unfair to everybody. We have to sit down and negotiate a serious budget agreement. And what Republicans must understand is that, yes, they have a 51-to-49 majority here in the Senate, but you need 60 votes to pass this type of legislation. You need 60 votes, and that means you cannot do it alone. You cannot give the Democratic caucus a fait accompli and expect Democrats to say: Oh, yes, sir, we are going to follow you. This requires bipartisan discussion on the parity issue and domestic spending and bipartisan discussion on DACA.

We have a strong majority of Members of the Senate who support a Dreamers piece of legislation and a path toward citizenship. We have a strong majority of the American people and a strong majority of Members of the Senate who want disaster relief. This should not be a difficult problem. The American people want a resolution, and they want it done in a bipartisan way. Let's do it. Let's not kick the can down the road. Republicans must understand that they must negotiate in a bipartisan way.

With that, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONGRATULATING THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA CRIMSON TIDE FOOTBALL TEAM FOR WINNING THE 2018 NATIONAL COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION COLLEGE FOOTBALL PLAYOFF NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, I rise today to offer my congratulations to the University of Alabama's Crimson Tide on the 2018 College Football Playoff National Championship victory against the University of Georgia Bulldogs.

I join the University of Alabama, the Crimson Tide Faithful, and the entire State of Alabama—my State—in commending this team on its hard-fought win and for showing perseverance in the midst of adversity time and time again. This year, the Tide overcame a host of injuries and midseason struggles to reach this achievement. The team even had to overcome, as the Presiding Officer will recall, a 13-point deficit in the second half of the championship game in Atlanta, winning ultimately 26 to 23 in the first overtime in a college football playoff national championship game. What a game.

Under Head Coach Nick Saban's leadership, the Crimson Tide fought to earn its fifth national title since 2009—demonstrating, I believe, nearly 10 years of dominance. This year's team, among other things, won various awards.

Minkah Fitzpatrick, who is a safety, won the Bednarik Award for best defensive player in the Nation and the Thorpe Award for best defensive back in the Nation. He was also named Associated Press First Team All-American.

Bradley Bozeman, an offensive lineman, was named AP Second Team All-American.

Jonah Williams, an offensive lineman, was named AP Third Team All-American.

Additionally, five players on the University of Alabama's football team were named First Team All-SEC.

Head Coach Nick Saban has now won six college football national championships, equaling the record of former Alabama football Head Coach Paul "Bear" Bryant. The Crimson Tide coaching staff has helped produce high-caliber student athletes and gentlemen. This team has brought great pride to the University of Alabama, the loyal fans of the Crimson Tide, and to the entire State of Alabama.

I would like to take a minute to thank Crimson Tide Head Coach Nick Saban, Athletic Director Greg Byrne, President Stuart Bell, and Chancellor Ray Hayes for their leadership.

Mr. President, at this time, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 375, submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 375) congratulating the University of Alabama Crimson Tide football team for winning the 2018 National Collegiate Athletic Association College Football Playoff National Championship.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 375) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, constituents of mine are hearing today

that there is a looming government shutdown—Friday at midnight; that if Congress hasn't passed a spending bill, it is possible the government could shut down. That would be a big mistake. Government shutdowns do not make sense.

We have legislation called End Government Shutdowns, by the way, which says that when Congress doesn't do their appropriations bills on time—which is never or rarely—that there should not be a shutdown; rather, continue the spending from the previous year, but ratchet it down over time to give the Appropriations Committee and Congress and the Senate an incentive to get the job done. But let's not shut down the government. When we do that, it doesn't help anybody. It doesn't help us as taxpayers because we end up coming back and paying people, and the inefficiencies of it create more costs. So I hope we are not even talking about that.

In the so-called continuing resolution, which is a short-term spending bill—which, again, is not the best way to govern, but that is what our choice is—in that continuing resolution to keep the government from shutting down, there is also, as I understand it, going to be something that is very good for our country. So, one, shutting down doesn't make sense, but two, let's be sure that the short-term spending bill that we do pass includes something very important—important to about 219,000 children in my home State of Ohio and millions of families around the country who depend on a program called the Children's Health Insurance Program, CHIP.

CHIP has traditionally been a bipartisan program. It is supported by Democrats and Republicans alike. In fact, the reauthorization of the Children's Health Insurance Program, CHIP, came out of the Finance Committee with a vote that was unanimous—Republicans and Democrats alike. Again, that doesn't happen often. It happened because people believe it is important to have that safety net program for our kids and for those families.

Right now, that program is really on life support. We are told that if we do not extend that program, some States will begin running out of money even in the next few weeks. One of those States could be Ohio, we are told. The numbers are not exactly accurate, I don't think, because nobody knows. That makes it very unpredictable and uncertain for those families and children. We know there are States running out of money right now.

By the way, the program ended in September, and since September 30, it has been given these short-term authorizations. That doesn't make sense.

My understanding is that the House of Representatives is going to actually put into the continuing resolution that they are going to send over here a longer term extension of the Children's Health Insurance Program—in fact, a